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CITY PUBLIC APOLOGY FROM JOHN ROSE, JR, CORPORATION COUNSEL

HARTFORD, CT – On behalf of the City of Hartford I submit this heart felt, sincere apology to Christopher Smith, to his mother Sonia Reid, to his father Christopher L. Smith, and to all the members of his family.

On November 7, 2001, Christopher Smith was grievously injured when his vehicle was struck by a Hartford police cruiser engaged in a pursuit of a fleeing criminal. Recently the matter of a civil suit against the City was resolved by mutual agreement. That is just one of the significant steps toward addressing what was and remains a major tragedy in the lives of Christopher Smith and his family.

The City of Hartford Charter was amended in 2003 to allow for a strong Mayor form of government. Mayor Perez took office in that new structure on January 1, 2004. He appointed Chief Harnett in June of 2004.

Public Safety is the first of Mayor Perez' six goals in his Strategic Plan for improving the lives of Hartford residents, working actively with the Police and Fire Departments in the City. As part of that commitment and in an effort to avoid accidents involving members of the public in the future, the Police Department under Chief Harnett has already begun implementation of a policy of reviewing at roll call the Department's policies and procedures relating to pursuits and the appropriate use of lights and sirens. This program will continue, in good faith, for as long as necessary to impress upon every officer the importance of ensuring the safety of the public while engaged in the pursuit and apprehension criminals.

In addition, every pursuit that occurs will continue to be subjected to a thorough review that is documented on a Special Investigation Report to ensure compliance with Department policy. The Chief commits that this review will focus on safety concerns and risks inherent to all pursuits, and that when necessary, officers involved, whether new recruits or certified personnel, will be required to undergo additional training and instruction including the use of a driving simulator.

Nothing I can say can undo what happened to Christopher Smith, but for the City, Mayor, the Police Chief and the Office of Corporation Counsel, I hope that he and his family know and appreciate the commitment the City has to improving the level of public safety for all the residents of Hartford and to the City's visitors.